

# Sociology of Sports

# Welfare & Sports Franchises

Subsidies (welfare) given to sports franchises the result of 2 factors

- 1. The **privileged position** accorded to sports
- 2. **Artificial scarcity** (owners control number of teams that exist)

# Why are subsidies given?

- 1. Sports teams **stimulate economic development**.
- 2. Sports teams establish a **national identification** for cities and regions
- 3. Sports teams facilitate **regional cooperation** among governments (Charlotte)
- 4. Sports teams provide opportunities to bring people back to **downtown** (Denver, Cleveland)

# Myth or truth

- “Just as the residents of Oz believed the Wizard could do anything, large numbers of people believes sports, teams and athletes are the elixirs for any social, economic and political ailments.” *Can sports truly save local economies? Is there any substance to this image, or is it merely a romantic (or mythic) notion used by owners?*

- Author, ‘Why Are Sports So Important To So Many People?’

# **Sports and civil unrest**

- Can sports minimize civil unrest in local communities?
- Success of Baltimore Orioles and Colts did not prevent a riot, but did they help minimize future violent outbursts?

# Psyche of Sports

Sports can play on the psyche of taxpayers and community leaders in several ways.

- 1. As a romanticized ideal
- 2. As an integral role of everyday life
- 3. Importance in the media
- 4. Political symbolism
- 5. Imagery for economic development

# Romanticized ideal

Some argue that sports offer positive values learned only through sports.

- hard work
- practice
- leadership
- team efforts
- group goals
- individual sacrifice

# Parents-kids

- Plus, sports is an area where kids and parents can play together

# Negatives of sports

- drug abuse
- rapes
- spousal abuse
- inappropriate risk-taking
- gambling
- promiscuity

# **Role models**

- If not sports, where to find role models? Where else can positive values be learned?

# Sports Language

- 'winners' and 'losers'
- 'go the distance'
- 'playing hardball'
- 'strike out'
- 'blindsided'
- 'go to bat'
- 'head's up'
- 'do-or-die situations'

# **Sports Language**

- What does this say – that sports language is so commonly used?

# Sports and Higher Education

- Universities use sports to attract and retain students and to please alums.
- Sports are a major part of homecomings.
- Sports are a big part of high school life.
- *Why do fans excuse excesses by coaches and players?*

# Sports & Media

- Sports fans – insatiable appetite for sports. Is this because media has generated this appetite or are the media simply serving what viewers/readers are hungry for? Media certainly has a self-interest. Sports add to profitability of newspapers, radio stations and TV stations.

# Sports & Media

- **1. Sports is an inexpensive source of news that is consumed by a market group that is attractive to advertisers.** Fans, who want to read about their teams, read and watch voraciously. That, in turn, attracts advertisers. In addition, production costs are much lower for games than regular shows.

# Sports & Media

- **2. Endless supply of live entertainment with unknown outcomes.** Inexpensive dramas and copy produced relatively inexpensively for advertisers. Media, therefore, have an incentive to help teams succeed in getting new stadiums and arenas.

# Why sports appeal to fans

- 1. Emotional reaction.** In every game, have winners and losers. Fans react.
- 2. No re-runs.** Every game is an new mini-drama that can be endlessly reviewed and discussed.
- 3. Beating the odds.** David beating Goliath. People then believes they can also overcome large obstacle.
- 4. Finality.** Games have clear-cut outcome in short period of time.

# Why sports appeal to fans

5. **Hope.** Always a tomorrow (or next season) for sports teams. Right, Cubs fans?
6. **Randomness.** Injuries are among the random events that can be witnessed, analyzed and replayed. Parallels lives of many fans. Events happen that people cannot control, nor change.